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CIVIL RIGHTS

(Ms. KENDRA S. HORN of Oklahoma asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KENDRA S. HORN of Oklahoma. Madam Speaker, today I rise to mark a historic moment for our democracy as the House passed the Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Today, more than 50 years after the original Voting Rights Act was passed into law, the right to be heard at the ballot box is under threat.

The VRAA defends our right to vote with provisions that increase election oversight, strengthen transparency in voting changes, and ensure that the fundamental principle of one person, one vote is intact.

As an Oklahoman, I am truly honored to stand here today to honor the history of a city as well as individuals with strong civil rights histories.

Just over 61 years ago in Oklahoma City, Clara Luper led a group of 13 children at the first sit-in in the Nation at the Katz Drugstore that integrated the first lunch counter, to be followed by much more.

Without Clara and those 13 children and without all of those who came before us, we wouldn't be here today recognizing the passage of the VRAA.

We have more work to do, but as we celebrate today's legislation, we should give thanks to the foot soldiers and those who came before who have laid the foundation and acknowledged the work we have yet to do.

HIGHER EDUCATION

(Mr. LEVIN of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN of California. Madam Speaker, I am honored to represent the University of California at San Diego, which is one of the leading research universities in the Nation.

As I have worked with my friends on the Education and Labor Committee to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, I have kept all the incredible students at UCSD in mind. I am especially proud of our work to improve access for graduate students and ease their financial burden.

Graduate students are the backbone of research universities, teaching and mentoring undergraduates, performing groundbreaking research, and innovating the solutions for 21st century problems. Unfortunately, many of those same students have crippling student loan debt.

That is why I am so glad that the College Affordability Act recreates the Federal Perkins Loan Program and strengthens the Pell Grant Program to better address the needs of our undergraduate and graduate students.

While there is much more that we need to do to support students, I am

proud to cosponsor the College Affordability Act and will continue to work with my colleagues to improve outcomes for our students.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I have been reminded again this week in conversations with some friends across the aisle that there are some people in here with whom I have extremely different views. But I know them, they have got good hearts, and they want to do the right thing; we just disagree on what that is.

There was a lot said today in the debate over the Voting Rights Act change. Some have tried to say and have just been mistaken—I don't think they were intentionally trying to misrepresent anything—but what we voted on today was not a reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act has been in effect, and it is still in effect.

But going back to the previous reauthorization that came through the Judiciary Committee I am on, it became clear that between the Republican and Democrat leaders in Judiciary, there was an agreement, and they weren't going to allow changes to their agreement. I pointed out to both of them back at the time: You have a provision in here that is reauthorized that will punish States for sins committed by grandparents—in some cases great-grandparents—that happened decades before, in many cases decades before some were born who were there. This is not supposed to be a country where we intentionally punish the children and grandchildren of somebody who committed an offense.

It was wrongdoing in preventing people from voting, and the Voting Rights Act addressed that. But it was reauthorized more than once, continuing to punish the same States that have been found to be lacking, and the data we had at the previous reauthorization showed clearly there were places in some districts, in places like New York, Wisconsin, and California, where the voting disparity and racial disparity was worse than in the States that were still being punished.

I know some say: Well, it is not a punishment for the Federal Government to say you are not trustworthy and so you don't get to be in charge of your elections; we have to approve every single thing you do.

That is an extraordinary and basically unconstitutional action by the Federal Government that has been deemed to be constitutional, but only until such time as the States that were offending have corrected the situation.

I know there was one newspaper in my district that reported I was against

the voting rights reauthorization. When I provided them a copy of my transcript from the reporters, the stenographers here, exactly as it was and they read what I actually said, instead of taking talking points from the left-wing alt-left media, the editor at the time—I know from things she had said, she apparently was a Democrat—but she was an honorable person, and they printed a correction and corrected what they had said.

I was in favor of the voting rights reauthorization, but not to continue to punish States that were not in violation and hadn't been for decades. So, in fact, my amendment would have required the punitive parts of the Voting Rights Act to apply to any State in the Union that was found to be in violation of the constitutional protections on voting.

I pointed out to the Republican leader at the time and the Democratic leader, John Conyers.

And actually, John Conyers was more open to making the change. He said: Well, you made a good point. Let me talk to some of our lawyers about it.

The Republican leader said: Absolutely not. We are not changing anything at all.

I said: But this is going to be struck down. There are some things we don't really know. This is one that is going to be struck down. Why risk the court just striking the whole thing down? If you allow my amendment, it will be constitutional, it won't any of it be struck down.

The Republican leader at the time said: Absolutely not.

Mr. Conyers came back to me later and said: I have talked to our lawyers, and they say you do make a good point, but since we have an agreement on it, it is just easier if we go forward, and if they strike something down, they strike it down.

The Supreme Court came back and did just what I said they would do. They struck down an unconstitutional part that I had tried to amend and make it constitutional.

But that is where we are. This today does not reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

It is interesting hearing comments from folks across the aisle about why this is so important that we don't disenfranchise votes. If you look at what the activity is, and even saying: Oh, there are 17 million people who have been disenfranchised because they are no longer allowed to vote.

Despite what some who make comments online might say, I am not stupid. I have won awards at every school I have been in. But I know that traditionally dead people who vote, vote Democrat. That has just been the way it is. Republicans have had a very difficult time getting dead people to vote Republican.

William F. Buckley talked about an uncle he had had who voted Republican his whole life until the year after he